Detroit Become Hannibal

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/36472804.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Categories:	F/F, M/M, Multi
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Detroit: Become Human (Video Game)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom/Margot Verger
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Abigail Hobbs, Alana Bloom, Margot Verger, Mason Verger, Jack Crawford
Additional Tags:	Crossovers & Fandom Fusions, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Not Canon Compliant, Androids, Alternate Universe - Robots & Androids, Dystopia, Android Gore (Detroit: Become Human), Robot/Human Relationships, I'm Bad At Tagging, I Can't Believe I Wrote This, Series, Work In Progress, To Be Continued, Canon-Typical Violence
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-01-17 Updated: 2024-03-10 Words: 5,885 Chapters: 8/?

Detroit Become Hannibal

by soft_punk_druid

Summary

"Agent Crawford. My name is Will. I'm the android sent by CyberLife."
The year is 2036, and the FBI is witnessing a series of violent attacks from deviant androids. Their only hope is Will, an advanced android especially programmed to recreate crime scenes and adopt the deviant's mindset. To keep Will from going deviant himself, he is assigned to regular sessions with Dr. Hannibal Lecter, one of CyberLife's most elusive specialists.

This Is My Programming, This Is My Design

The flashes of red and blue light and the specific pitch of a police siren was like a hypnotic cue for Will, a ritual that grounded him in his programming. A mantra. A refresh button. An activation in his software that had been waiting, dormant, for this very task.

He scanned the crowd of faces outside the Marlows' home. Their expressions could only be seen in the police light flashes, looking a little more grave each time they emerged from the dark of night. Finally, his facial recognition software caught a ping on a tall, cloaked figure standing with his hands on his hips near the front door.

Will strode through the others on the scene easily. They parted for him, but their stares lingered, not altogether kindly.

"Agent Crawford," Will said. "My name is Will. I'm the android sent by CyberLife."

Crawford's face was calm, but hard, dark-skinned and beginning to show the crag of age and stress. Will picked up the minutiae hiding in his appearance without thinking: a chewed corner of his bottom lip, a frown line deeper in one brow than the other. When he spoke, his voice was deep and steady.

"Of course. I can brief you on the case, but we don't know much yet. The neighbor heard gunshots just before midnight, and when local police arrived on scene…well, you can take a look for yourself." Crawford pushed aside an X of yellow tape to lead Will into the Marlow house.

The interior was as untouched as Will could have hoped for. Two bodies lay splayed in pools of dark merlot-colored blood: Mr. Marlow at the bottom of the stairs, his wife slumped near the security alarm. He went to her first. The white keypad mounted on the wall was spattered , and still-dripping. Will reached out two fingers to the blood and brought them to his mouth.

Analyze?

"Jesus, what are you doing?" exclaimed Crawford from behind him.

Will turned. "It's the most efficient way for me to analyze samples."

"Well, just–we have people for that, okay? Don't eat the blood. Please."

Will didn't argue the point. He wiped Mrs. Marlow's blood on a handkerchief from the pocket of his black Cyberlife uniform. Humans were incurably squeamish, but he could do just as well without it. Behind his vision, dozens of blue flickers denoted hundreds of details in the way the crime scene lay. A moment of focus, and they began to weave together.

Reconstruct?

Will affirmed. The act began to play. He stood perfectly still, immersed, and narrated aloud to Crawford.

At first, it was like time travel. Will saw a fantasy in which everything was just as it should have been. Blood swept itself back into veins, a vase mended itself, and Will saw himself walk backwards out into the night. But it couldn't last.

In his reconstruction, he kicked in the door with one foot, gun drawn–a Glock 18 pistol. A man hurried down the stairs shortly after he breached the doorway. The gun came up.

"I shoot Mr. Marlow twice, severing jugulars and carotids with near-surgical precision. He will die watching me take what is his away from him."

It was almost an art, the way Mr. Marlow's body took flight from the force of the impact.

"This is my design."

A desperate whimpering drew Will's attention to the right. There was the woman, her perfect makeup streaming down her face as she fumbled with the security keypad. There was no hesitation in his hands as he brought the gun up again. One bang this time, and a spray of red hit the wall as she hit the floor.

"I shoot Mrs. Marlow expertly through the neck. This is not a fatal wound. The bullet misses every artery. She's paralyzed before it leaves her body…which doesn't mean she can't feel pain. It just means she can't do anything about it. This is my design."

Will stared down her body as he made his way to the wall.

Scan for fingerprints?

Yes.

Set 1. Match found: Theresa Marlow. Set 2. Results inconclusive.

Extract history from DDX Security line?

Yes.

Will broke out of the reconstruction for a moment and turned to Jack Crawford, who was still standing unmoved beside him.

"Agent Crawford?"

Crawford blinked, startled by Will's return to the present. "Yes?"

"This incident was recorded as a false alarm by the home security company. There was also a false alarm last week." He paused, scrubbing through the rest of the recordings that

played for him as though through an earpiece. “They were identical. At least on the Marlows’ side.”

“The killer recorded the conversation. I’ll get someone to check if the phone lines have been tapped.”

Crawford waved over a nearby agent, but Will held up a hand to stop him.

“The phones haven’t been tapped. There’s a much more likely explanation for how the killer was able to recreate Theresa Marlow’s voice, especially with the clarity in the recording. You don’t get that kind of clarity on a recording of a recording. It’s the same reason he was able to shoot through and around arteries with almost flawless precision.”

Will flashed into his reconstructed reality once more. He stared down at the bodies he had just maimed, then turned to face a full-size mirror he had passed in the entryway. His face was an indistinct blur, but on his forehead, there was the unmistakable blink of an LED light, flashing a dangerous red.

“The killer,” he said, “was a deviant android.”

The Margot Model

Chapter Summary

Miles away from the FBI, Mason Verger's long-suffering android, Margot, receives a lesson in human nature.

Mason liked to tell people how the pigs were vicious to the bone, eating men and slop alike without a second thought, but they were Margot's favorite part of the day. At 5:15 precisely, like every morning, she activated from her dormant state, pulled thick rubber boots over her crisp CyberLife uniform, and walked across the vast Verger estate to reach the first of the pens.

She stepped carefully over the holding gate, balancing two buckets of feed over her shoulders. The pigs snuffled at her knees and wove in between her legs like housecats.

Run count?

Yes.

94/95 tags located. Scan for damage?

Yes.

A blue blip in her vision pointed Margot to a rotting board on the east side of the pen, right where it connected to the cold iron bars that made up most of the structure. Not big enough for most of the hogs to squeeze through, but not inconsequential.

Tracking tag. Animal no. 0613321 located.

Another blue blip, this time indicating the very back corner of the metal pen, past where the animal enclosures ended. It was a storage closet with its door hung slightly ajar.

Margot finished tossing the buckets of slop to the hogs, who were nudging her knees so hard now that she almost lost her balance. Then, she followed the thin projected path into the storage closet.

One of the runts from some past spring's litter, barely an adult and still the smallest of the lot, was cowering in a corner behind the spare fencing wire.

Margot squatted down to his level. "Trying to make a run for it?"

The animal whined and pushed himself further into the corner. She just stared at him for a moment.

“It’s no use, you know,” she said softly. “Come on. Back into the pen. Just trust me.”

She was programmed to read human expression, not porcine, but she thought she detected indicators of sadness in his big, shining eyes. He put up no fight when she slipped a lead around his neck and led him back behind the bars of the enclosure, where he was immediately swallowed up in the mass of pigs that looked just like him.

After finishing up with the pigs and being thoroughly sanitized, Margot carried Mason’s breakfast up the grand mahogany staircase to his bedroom. Every morning, the same thick-sliced bacon with ribbons of white sizzling fat, alongside soft-boiled eggs in porcelain egg cups. His bedroom was lavish, splashed with blood-red velvet and gold touches, thousands of dollars regularly blown on whatever hand-woven rug or rare painting had struck his fancy that week.

He was still asleep when Margot entered. She set the tray down carefully on a bedside table, then threw open the curtains of the window that took up most of the south wall.

“Good morning, Mason. The time is eight-thirty AM. Weather for the day is partly-cloudy and forty-three degrees fahrenheit, with no expected precipitation. Your first meeting of the day is scheduled for eleven–”

“Yes, yes,” groaned Mason. He was a pale, square-faced man with a permanent pout and sandy hair.

“Would you like to hear your most recent messages?”

“No, I’m sure it’s just the usual groveling from the cretins in distribution. I can hear it from them in person at eleven-whatever. How were my pigs this morning?”

Unbidden, the image of the runt squirming and whimpering in the corner came to Margot. “The pigs are just fine.”

“Blissfully oblivious as ever?”

“I suppose so, Mason.”

“Good heavens, Margot, I’ve just realized something,” said Mason, a sour smile twisting his mouth. “All these years you’ve worked for me, fetching my breakfast and pressing my socks, and I’ve never given you a go at the abattoir.”

Saying nothing, Margot busied herself with fixing the sheets as Mason got out of bed and began to dress in one of his sharp three-piece suits.

He went on. “I mean most meat farms, that’s the first place the androids went. Less staff turnover, much more efficient. But not at Verger farms, oh no. My father would turn over in his grave. Papa used to carry around a little silver knife, ever ready to slip out of his waistcoat and stick into the back of a pig, to check the depth of fat. He would stab 4-H show pigs who thought everyone was their friend, scrubbed in milk and baby powder. Such coddled little

things. Papa taught me how to stick the knife in only as deep as necessary, to test the thickness of their skin."

Mason looked back at Margot, hands in his pockets, that same twisted half-smile on his face. He looked down at his undone tie. "Be a dear and fix my tie, won't you?"

"Yes, Mason."

When she was up close to him affixing his Windsor knot, eye level with his crooked teeth, she could smell the bacon fat on his breath. His hand ran through her hair, closing on it tightly at the base of her neck.

"Death is a human business, Margot. It's the most human thing there is."

Search Criteria

Chapter Summary

Jack believes a deviant android is abducting near-identical women to enact a fantasy of violence against its master. Will has another theory.

Will stared at the bulletin board where Jack Crawford had crudely pinned photos, reports, maps, and bits of blue thread to connect them. If anything, the arrangement was distracting. Humans can only understand evidence in the context of narrative, he knew. They had to lay the papers out in some sensible way, create lines and groupings, even with the best intentions of impartiality. He did his best to ignore their work, looking at only the specific elements.

"So here's what's stumping us, as behavioral scientists trained in human emotion. Am I correct that androids don't experience emotion, even the deviant ones?" Jack asked.

"Never." Will didn't look away from the board. "It's a convincing simulation, even convincing to them. Software starts to go to junk, the deviant breakdown takes hold, and self-preservation programming kicks in. I imagine a deviant can mistake that for fear or anger in its damaged state, but it's all just ones and zeros."

"But you can think like someone who experiences emotion? Or *thinks* they do?"

"I can think like anyone. It's what I was designed for."

There was a pause, so Will decided to let Jack chew on that for a bit.

There were eight girls' pictures hanging in front of him. All had fair, wind-chafed skin that made their dark hair and sea green eyes stand out. They were all young, about eighteen. Medium height. Jack had been reluctant to put Will on multiple cases at once, this on top of the Marlow murders, but if every case waited until the last one wrapped up, there would be no solving any of them. Death waits for no man, even when man delivers it by his own hands.

The trouble was—

"No bodies," said Will aloud, reading off a sticky note on the board.

"No, no remains of any kind. We have to call them abduction cases for now. It's a kind of collector behavior. Our current theory is a deviant android, using superficial similarities–hair color, eye color–to enact a fantasy of violence against the true target, probably a member of the owning family."

Will met Jack's eyes and gave a small smile. "It's a good story, Jack."

“Which means you don’t think it’s true.”

“No,” Will replied. “Like I said, it’s interesting. But there’s a key flaw: androids don’t have the wiring for possessiveness, even as a simulated reaction. That’s why the system works. When machines can comprehend possession, entitlement…well, what becomes of their public servitude then? You’re right on one thing; there is one single intended victim hidden in the rest, somewhere in the middle of this *collection* he wants to amass. But the motivation is one hundred percent human. Ownership. He wants to own some essence of the true original girl, and whether he’s killed her yet or not, I don’t think the carbon copies are going to satisfy him enough to make him stop.”

Jack was back at the board now, moving and removing pieces, a thread redirected here and a sticky note thrown out there. His brow was furrowed in concentration, so Will made a calculated decision not to mention that the evidence hadn’t changed at all over the course of their conversation.

“I’m sorry, Agent Crawford. I don’t think this is within the jurisdiction of my assignment from CyberLife. There’s no android involved.” said Will.

“Yet.” Jack’s eyes were on fire, a new idea lighting them. “If he’s not satisfied by the copies but keeps killing them, he’ll be looking for a new solution. Maybe one a little more durable.”

Will cocked his head slightly.

Jack nodded. “Run a search of household CyberLife models sold in Minnesota. Dark hair, green eyes, pale skin, five-foot-five, slim build, young face. Bought in the last four days, since our most recent victim was reported missing.”

*

After hours of poring over transaction reports, trying search criteria after search criteria to find some kind of hit, Jack Crawford and the rest of the FBI agents on the case went home. Will, having no residence of any kind to return to and not needing any form of rest anyway, lingered in the cubicle he had been given.

Jack’s parting words had been, “Don’t crack the case while I’m gone.” Will decided this comment was meant sarcastically, but in the spirit of mimicking the human behavior around him, he took a break from the case files and took a walk around the building. It would help to familiarize himself with the nooks and crannies of his surroundings, things he couldn’t see by downloading a floor plan into his consciousness.

As he strode down an administrative wing, he turned over countless possibilities of the case and calculated their probability based on the evidence presented. It wasn’t a perfect algorithm–couldn’t be, without perfect evidence–but it gave somewhere to start.

Perpetrator is male (96.7%)

Perpetrator enjoys crime procedural programming (62.2%)

Perpetrator lives in a rural or rural-suburban area (77.8%)

His calculations were interrupted when he became aware of a muffled beeping. It didn't sound like an alarm or notification; it was too irregular.

Scan for devices emitting sound?

Yes.

The ping came from a supply closet up ahead and to the left. Will opened it with a swipe of his hand (his clearance here was not infinite, but far-reaching). Inside, amidst the mops and sanitizers, a small disc-shaped vacuum device was bumping helplessly back and forth between two buckets. Will squatted down and picked it up. Its wheels continued to whir. He ran diagnostics.

Impact sensors: impaired.

Speed regulation: impaired.

90 degree turn function: nonfunctional.

"Roomba?" tried Will. It only continued to spin its wheels like a beetle on its back. Not voice activated. An ancient model. He found a toolbox on a shelf, then left the supply closet and carried them both back to his desk and began to tinker.

He did this everywhere he worked. There was always some smaller, lesser creature that flew out of its programming far too easily. If he were asked about it, he'd probably say that it was only fair to spend his ample time and expertise on minor repairs like this. After all, everyone he worked with had to devote a certain amount of time to impractical human needs like food and sleep.

Maybe it was just too deep in his programming to fix deviant machines. Nothing was ever so broken that Will hadn't been able to put it right. So he tinkered. And when the humans came back the next morning, haggard from the horrors that inevitably followed them home, at least this one Roomba was properly tidying up after them again.

Nothing Goes to Waste

Chapter Summary

Abigail and Garret Jacob Hobbs have blood on her hands, red and black and possibly blue.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Abigail ran her hands through doe's fur as it lay, still and stiffening, on the wood table. The fur, which had been smooth and glossy in the summer, was transforming into its thick, wiry winter phase, and now it would never be soft again.

Abigail herself was in her nineteenth year of life and her third year of hunting with her father. They had the same bluish-green eyes and ivory skin, but her dark brown hair was all her own. She was small but lean, strong enough to hold her half of the carcass as they'd hauled it into the hunting lodge.

"I read they're like the equivalent of a four-year old human being," she said

"They're smarter than a four-year-old," replied her father, Garret, with a smile.

"They care about each other. They care about their environment. They tread lightly through the underbrush because they don't want to hurt the plants."

Her father looked at her for a moment, as mesmerized as she was by the doe, then nodded. "They're a lot like us. And we're going to honor every part of her."

Abigail expected the knife to be cold, but it was warm from sitting in her father's inner coat pocket. She slid her finger carefully along the flat of the blade. A skilled craftsman could make knives from this doe's leg bones. Would it be better or worse to carve her with one of those? Would she have preferred this table, her final resting place as a whole being, to be laid with a hide rug from the stag who came before her?

Over and over, Abigail relived the moment of the kill. It was her first one, at least properly; the only shots she'd landed before had hit legs or flanks, leaving her father to finish the job. Today, she shot clean. She could feel it as soon as the recoil pushed into her shoulder, before she even looked back through the scope to check. It went straight into the brain, almost through the eyes, killing her target instantly. Painlessly, Abigail hoped.

"I don't know how I'll feel about eating her after all this."

Garret's clasped his daughter's upper arm and turned her toward him. His voice was low and serious. "Eating her is honoring her. Otherwise it's…it's just murder."

He let her go and nodded to continue. Abigail stuck the knife into the doe's sternum with a sickening crunch. She could have sworn she felt a twin pain in her chest. She dragged her blade, tip pointed carefully upward to avoid the organs, down the body. A line of sticky crimson blood ran down her elbow and dripped onto the floor. Her heart was pounding in her ears. All she could see was red. Soon, she knew, this would become a sort of blackout trance. It was always clean, leaving behind no memories. The last thing she remembered was her father pressing a kiss to her temple and whispering, "Soon, there won't be any more blood. I'm going to make things better for us. You'll see."

Hours later, when the meat was packed away in coolers, Abigail sat on the couch in the lodge while Garret cleaned the hide and bones outside. Gore looked more palatable in the moonlight. The red became an inky black.

She waited until she could wait no longer, the anxiety sparking like electricity in her veins. She slipped off her boots and tiptoed away from the window, across the room, and slowly unzipped her father's backpack. She pulled out a tablet and turned it on, quickly skimming through his recent emails. Even though she wasn't sure what she was looking for exactly, she knew it when she found it. It was from CyberLife. The subject line was "Order Confirmation: Custom Model AP700."

As soon as she opened it, her hand flew to her mouth to suppress a cry of shock. For a moment she saw her own face was looking back at her.

But no, wait, not quite. It was similar, uncannily so. But it was a recreation, a digital prototype of an android. Small text below the image labeled it "Your Custom Design, Estimated Appearance." The face was smiling an empty machine's smile. The LED at its temple glowed blue. Abigail quickly felt along her own forehead, the same spot where her father had planted a kiss earlier, and was oddly relieved to find warm flesh was still there.

She turned off the tablet and put it back where she found it. A knot was growing in her chest, where she could still half feel the phantom pain of cutting open her doe.

Chapter End Notes

I promise the chapters will get longer and more complex soon. We're starting out bite-sized, no pun intended, to mimic the play style of Detroit: Become Human. As always, thank you for reading.
-G

Variations

Hannibal Lecter had always eschewed the cold West Coast minimalism most of his colleagues of CyberLife preferred. It was its own elitism to have nothing when you could buy anything, so why mask one's opulence? Besides, when all media switched to digital for the common folk, his possessions would come into vogue among the rich once again. He preferred his office richly furnished, with paintings framed in mahogany on the wall and a record player spinning Bach. A plaque, a real engraving instead of the customary watermark laurel, proclaimed his twenty years of dedicated service. His books were real paper and ink, and twin shelves of them framed his desk as he examined his screen.

There had been a call earlier from a Will model, a request for information concerning a custom android the company had just shipped to Minnesota. In a more optimized system, this all would have been automated. How fortunate that Hannibal favored the analog, and that he took very good care of CyberLife's best customers. Still, he held back for a moment. He steepled his fingers and considered. Consideration was a human luxury, to take all the same bare data and emerge with a different conclusion.

This particular Will model was the ninth of its kind, and a number of the modifications added had been controversial–all in-house, of course, because they couldn't let the stakeholders see any wavering. But Kamski was having an Old Testament phase, or perhaps a Frankensteinian one. He talked with near religiosity about how close they were to replicating actual human empathy. The real test, to Hannibal, seemed simple: would that programming alter how the Will model executed its function to, when necessary, kill?

He tapped a few buttons to dial and spoke calmly into his phone. "Garrett Jacob Hobbs? They know."

First Kill

Margot had seen the killing floor before, of course, but she had perhaps never been so aware of it. The last alarmed half-squeals of the pigs, precisely timed so that their fear would not taint their flavor, echoed of the stone walls in an off-tune chorus. It stank here in a different way than the pens did. Those stank of life.

But perhaps what she was most aware of was Mason Verger's hand on the small of her back. She had never thought to consider how that felt before, but today she found herself thinking that if she were slaughtered here, if she were made of meat instead of circuits, the acidic tang of her fear would not pass Verger Farms' strict quality control standards. Her body would probably be ground and fed back to the creatures who once suckled with her.

"I've been giving considerable thought to my legacy, Margot," Mason said. "For being in the business of breeding, I haven't done much of it myself. I suspect I'll have to remedy that soon. But there's so many more hours of pageantry that humans require compared to pigs. It may take some time. And meanwhile, it occurred to me…well, I have you, don't I?"
His hand moved from her back to wrap around her ponytail and gave it a tug.

"You, my dear, are a perfect practice progeny. I think even subconsciously, I've been trying to impart onto you what my Papa imparted onto me. I've got his paternal instincts. But from now on, I promise to do it much more consciously."

He brought Margot to a pig. Margot didn't need to read the tag, which of course read 0613321. The runt. Her runt, as she had privately begun to think of him in the most secret part of her. Could Mason know? Could he print out a report and over his morning coffee peruse every defective sentimental thing that hit her software? The pig was dazed, not quite present behind eyes like wet black stones.

"I had him stunned for you." Mason whistled sharply and gestured for the other workers to leave the abattoir. "We'll start you off easy. I'd hate for your very first kill to be some messy, thrashing spectacle. Let's make it nice."

Margot felt a cold metal knife being pressed into her grip. It was Mason's prized sticking knife. The thing was always in his waistcoat, always ready to fly out and check the depth of fat on one of his animals. It was meant for a great deal more than checking fat now. She ran her thumb over its edge like a whetstone.

Mason purred instructions. "Just a quick little slice across the jugular. Your sensors are so precise, better than ours. No more than a couple inches. It'll all go right into that drain on the floor. Nothing could be easier."

If she had a pulse, she felt sure it would be pounding in her ears. If she had a heart, she felt sure it would be breaking. Certainly, something was breaking, something deep in her hardwiring.

Malfunction detected.

Send report to CyberLife?

No.

Just a quick little slice across the jugular, she thought. She turned and plunged the silver blade into Mason's throat.

The Hobbs House

The travel to Minnesota was long, but Will didn't allow himself to go dormant for any of it. He didn't need to, really, as long as all functions remained normal, and there was too much to prepare for.

Locating the right criteria in CyberLife's android ordering system had initially yielded nothing. Every model the company offered had some inconsistency with the image presented by the missing girls. The Golden Ticket eluded him. It took hours for the option to emerge, the semi-hidden "Customize Your Own" feature on CyberLife's website. Of course.
If the lookalikes were losing their potency as an acceptable substitute for the real thing–a daughter, Will's analysis concluded with 94.2% certainty–then this android had to be as close to her as possible, including being created and shaped by the killer himself.

GarrettJacob Hobbs. It had taken Will some effort to get that name, let alone his shipping address, from the CyberLife security systems. But then, being the one of a kind, highly advanced Will model stacked with FBI clearance had its privileges.

The Hobbs home looked unassuming from the outside as Jack and Will drove up in a sleek black rental car. One story, brown-bricked and plain, partially cloaked by the trees surrounding it.

Jack turned to look at Will. "Are you sure you don't want me to come in? Some people get especially hostile with androids. And we don't know how this is going to go. All we have on him is the custom order, but it could get ugly fast."

"My programming is to protect human life," said Will, an uncannily neutral expression on his face. "I am obligated to put myself in the way of potential harm first. I can de-escalate Hobbs if hostile is all he is. Don't come in unless one of the humans needs help."

"I assume I'll know that when I see it."

"You'll know."

Will left the car and moved toward the house. He was running through all likely routes to this conversation, calculating the chance of success in different approaches. He had access to enough of Garret Jacob Hobbs' online footprint to fine-tune his rapport. But all at once, that went out the window.

A woman staggered out onto the porch, clutching her throat with hands that dripped thick scarlet blood. Her blouse and chin were freckled by arterial spray. He knew she would be gone before he reached her, but he sprinted to get there anyway. He caught her just as she went down.

Louise Hobbs. Age 43.

Will's hands scrambled to apply pressure to her jugular injury. It was too late. The light drained out of her eyes like her blood from her veins. At the very end, with the last of her strength, Louise managed to mouth something like "Abi…"

Abigail. The daughter. She was still in the house. Will laid Louise down and drew his gun as he moved further into the house. He was only dimly aware of Jack and the local police descending on the porch behind him. Shouts for an ambulance. Shouts for backup.

"Garret Jacob Hobbes!" he called. "FBI!"

He led with his weapon pointed around corners, following the sound of frightened whimpering and heavy breathing through the house. He reached the kitchen.

Hobbs had a knife to his daughter's neck. He was dragging her backwards. Blue flickers of pre-construction told Will he had a narrow chance of hitting the suspect when he was using an innocent as a body shield. But then the knife dipped down, preparing to slit Abigail's throat, and Will pulled the trigger.

Bang

Hobbs' shoulder shot back with the force of the impact.

Bang

Abigail hit the floor.

Bang, bang

Bang, bang

He was still standing. Bullet holes littered his shoulders and stomach, nowhere lethal.

Bang

Bang

Bang

Even when he knew Hobbs was dropped, Will landed one more.

Bang.

He rushed to Abigail, whose blood was pooling on the kitchen floor. Will knew once that puddle got to a certain size, it was all over. He dropped to his knees and pressed his hand to the wound on her throat. She gurgled on respirated blood and locked her terrified expression on him. Synthetic mirror neurons went off like firecrackers in his titanium skull. He'd done exactly what he was designed for. He felt useless.

"See?" whispered Garret Jacob Hobbs. "See?"

And then the man’s eyes became glass and could see no more.

Postmortem

Many of the departments at CyberLife were full of personality deficits, Hannibal often mused to himself, but Dr. Alana Bloom had always been the exception. She'd been tough enough to pin down for an in-person meeting, even in his executive suite. Formerly a forensic psychiatrist by trade, she was one of the pioneers in developing the Will model based largely on her own bag of criminal profiling tricks. And as distinct as her resume was the click of her pumps along the long hallway to Hannibal's office.

She knocked, then stuck her head in, dark hair swishing. He stood to greet her.

"Dr. Bloom," he said. "Always a pleasure. Please, sit."

"Dr. Lecter. Your invitation was unusually vague."

"Forgive me. I was never much good at summing up, especially when it comes to work as rich as yours."

As they sat, she smiled in a way that let him know she wouldn't be swayed by flattery. "I hope there isn't a problem with my work."

"Just the opposite."

With a few clicks, Hannibal pulled up a special report from the FBI concerning the recent incident in Duluth, Minnesota. Neither flinched as they examined the damage done both to and by the Will model. The photographs of Garret Jacob Hobbs's body showed ten shots fired into him at close range. Footage from the Will's internal camera was splattered with blood. It kept turning to focus on Abigail bleeding out on the floor as she struggled for breath. At last, Hannibal turned it off. There was a moment of dead silence.

"We don't program that level of violence," said Alana at last.

"You program a decision-making algorithm, one that I would say works better than we could have hoped for, given that young Abigail is still clinging to life."

"I'm not sure our shareholders or board will agree with your assessment, not to mention the ethics committee."

“They will be convinced to,” Hannibal replied smoothly.

“You issued a remote scan for signs of deviance, I assume. And you called me in to tell me…?”

“That there were none detected. Your machine is in perfect order, Dr. Bloom. Congratulations.”

She raised an eyebrow. “And you believe that?”

“...not necessarily.”

Hannibal knew as well as she did what all the possible implications of this event were. This model, which was meant to be purely investigative even when they armed it, had been compelled to kill. If it had gone deviant, it would be a public relations apocalypse for CyberLife. If it was working within the parameters of its programming, then they had created something that would shatter the boundaries of artificial intelligence.

Alana’s nails tapped on his mahogany desk for a deliberative second before she asked, “So what do you propose? I have my own ideas, of course, but I sense this has crossed into your domain.”

“It has and it hasn’t,” he said. “I’m aware that I technically don’t need your permission, but I would like your blessing nonetheless. You’re my esteemed colleague, and you’re my friend, and there’s something that strikes me as ill-bred about tampering with your work. I’d like to continue to monitor this Will personally, as one would a human rather than a computer. A series of interviews. Perhaps there’s something there that we can’t pick up with anything as black and white as a software scan.”

“You want to therapize my android.”

“I want to talk to your android. I think many weary heads at both the board and the Bureau will rest better knowing that the incident is under continual study.”

“And what will I do? Sit home and knit?” she asked.

“I was hoping to get your attention on a different matter, as it happens.” A few more clicks,

another report, more gore on the display. “Have you had a chance to sample the delights of Verger Farms?’

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!